

The training audience occupies their normally assigned workstations, mobile command posts, patrol vehicles or emergency response equipment. Participants communicate with the EPICS simulation center over normal communications channels. Computer workstations portray the simulated environment and effects of player inputs. Each workstation screen is set up so the individual players can only see what they would observe in the real world. Players utilize their real world communications procedures and information systems (dispatch) to gain information, assign tasks, receive feedback and monitor the situation. Leaders and staff interact with the simulated environment through their normal leader/subordinate (facilitator) chain-of-command.

Player inputs provide leaders and staff the ability to practice and refine their skills to command, manage and communicate. Powerful logic models accurately portray the time, distance traveled and effect of player inputs upon the simulated environment and public safety agency personnel and equipment.

Automatic visual displays reflect the computer-modeled responses to player inputs. Some of the responses that are automatically provided to the player are the results of search and detection, casualty assessment, vehicle speed, and micro tactics such as seek cover under fire, enter a firing position and travel on roads.

Identification of the leaders and staff members to be trained is critical to the success of an EPICS exercise. If mid-level supervisors such as sergeants and lieutenants are the selected training audience, then patrolmen and senior supervisors facilitate the EPICS exercise by role playing the training scenario and providing realistic message traffic, radio calls, crowd reactions, suspect actions, and other responses. These facilitators are key to the success of an EPICS exercise; they bring life to the simulated environment by providing realistic responses to questions from the training audience and placing the Janus outputs into context. Facilitators also act as the opposing players, creating realistic action-reaction sequences. Using a series of interlaced vignettes, the EPICS facilitators are able to stress experienced supervisors and provide the basis for valuable learning in a safe, realistic, cost efficient environment. This interlacing of vignettes within the master scenario establishes an exercise rhythm that brings to light the strengths and weaknesses simultaneously in communication, coordination and control of both routine and extraordinary events.

Preparing for and conducting an EPICS exercise is a five-step process:

- 1) scenario/vignette preparation,
- 2) hardware setup and facilitator training,
- 3) exercise rehearsal,
- 4) exercise execution, and
- 5) after action review (AAR)/de-brief.

EPICS technicians work closely with leaders and subject matter experts in the public safety community to create the specific training environment by developing the scenarios and vignettes

necessary to meet the training objectives of the agency or jurisdiction. The resultant scenario is a highly refined training tool that models core competencies, tailoring them to the identified needs and capabilities of specific training audiences.

Once at the training site, or from a remote location, EPICS personnel set up the hardware along with the requisite network and communications interfaces before training begins. While the Janus interface is easy to master with limited pre-exercise training, Janus technicians monitor the exercise during which they assist with the conduct of the exercise and provide informational feedback. To insure the maximum learning value of the exercise they also assist in preparation of an interactive AAR. EPICS uses visualization tools that not only show what happened, but more importantly, let the audience discover why something happened.

The focus of an EPICS Exercise is not the computer simulation, but the interaction of people engaged in responding to a set of circumstances within which they either benefit from or suffer the consequences of their decisions, actions or inactions. The true learning that takes place in an EPICS Exercise is during the AAR where the results are reviewed in a controlled and non-threatening learning environment.

The EPICS simulation center can be sited near the bulk of the training audience or established at a remote facility. The EPICS system can be deployed to an exercise site and, with minimal train-up time, utilized by any agency.



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